

# La Crosse FRO Accomplishment Highlights Report

## *Habitat Restoration and Conservation:*

### Live Paddlefish Displayed for Habitat Project Dedication

08/07/2003

*This event informed visitors (various publics) about the biology, habitat use, and population status of paddlefish, a species of special concern.*



Staff from the La Crosse Fishery Resource Office netted four paddlefish for viewing by the public at the Polander Lake Dedication held August 7, 2003 on the Winona District of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. The rare fish was viewed by over 100 visitors, including Ron Kind's and Gil Gutnecht's Congressional aides. Reactions to the large prehistoric fish were varied. Some people were unaware that such a beautiful (or frightening) fish existed, while others were delighted to set their eyes on the unusual creature that they had only read or heard stories about. To add to the delight (or horror), another ancient species, the silver lamprey, was attached to the fish, showing the public a real life example of external parasitism.

The dedication ceremony, a celebration of the completion of a habitat improvement project, was hosted by the Winona District of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. Prior to construction of this project, concerns were raised about the possible negative impact it might have on the area as paddlefish habitat. La Crosse FRO completed a pre- and post-construction study on paddlefish habitat use of the area and found that paddlefish have not been negatively impacted. In fact, it appears that a secondary goal of the project, enhancing paddlefish habitat, was accomplished. The four paddlefish were captured in an area that was dredged as part of the project. Use of this area by paddlefish was not documented in the pre-construction study, but frequent use was documented in the post-construction study.

Ann Runstrom

## *Outreach:*

### More to "Honk" about than just Ducks at the 5th Annual Ducks Unlimited Festival in

Oshkosh, WI

08/15/2003

*This was a great event to inform people and answer questions about exotic species (Asian carp, round goby, zebra mussels etc.) and native species (lake sturgeon, paddlefish, Higgins' eye mussels etc.). La Crosse FRO received a great opportunity to "honk" their horn about their accomplishments and how they help conserve important natural resources for future generations.*

The 5th Annual Ducks Unlimited Great Outdoors Festival was held on August 15-17, 2003 at the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) Airfield in Oshkosh, WI. La Crosse FRO employee Heidi Keuler and volunteer Matt Keuler worked in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife tent at the La Crosse FRO and Upper Mississippi Fish and Wildlife Refuge displays. Exotic species such as the round goby, zebra mussel, and the Asian carp and native species such as mussels, paddlefish, and lake sturgeon were some of the subjects featured by the La Crosse FRO display. The La Crosse District of the Upper Mississippi Fish and Wildlife Refuge displayed duck identification (Ducks on a Stick), art work from the Junior Duck Stamp Contest, the Wisconsin Centennial Quilt, and information about the Upper Mississippi Fish and Wildlife Refuge. Other Fish and Wildlife exhibitors included Necedah National Wildlife Refuge, Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge, Horicon National Wildlife Refuge, Ecological Services Office, Wisconsin Private Lands Office and several others. This was a great event to inform people and answer questions about exotic species (Asian carp, round goby, and zebra mussels) and native species (lake sturgeon, paddlefish, and Higgins' eye mussels). La Crosse FRO received a great opportunity to "honk" their horn about their current projects and accomplishments and how they help conserve important natural resources for future generations.



Wisconsin Centennial Quilt

**Heidi Keuler**

## ***Aquatic Nuisance Species:***

### **Fish and Wildlife Service and Park Service Monitor the St. Croix River for Zebra Mussels** **08/22/2003**

*The data gathered from the monitoring of zebra mussels is vital to resource managers to reduce the impact of this exotic species. It is also used in the recovery plans for two species of federally endangered mussels.*



Divers from both the National Park Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service searched for zebra mussels during the third week of August. The place was the St. Croix River, starting just north of the Stillwater Bridge and working their way South. The dive team changed their monitoring technique, in an effort to cover the substrate more thoroughly and try to detect the leading edge of zebra mussel reproduction. This strategy worked nicely and the first sign of reproduction was determined to be just south of Hudson, WI. The exotic mussels were found near a marina and a popular boating location. Reproduction was apparent, however, the number of zebra mussels was less than 5 per meter square.

One additional dive will be conducted in October; data from the three annual dives will be analyzed along with data from the multi-plate monitoring to form recommendations, which will be presented to the St. Croix Zebra Mussel Task Force.

**Scott Yess**

## ***Habitat Restoration and Conservation:***

### **La Crosse FRO Supports USGS on NAQWA Study** **08/28/2003**

*This data will provide insight to water quality problems in eastern Iowa and give resource managers the information they need to improve current conditions.*

La Crosse FRO receives frequent requests for assistance on from several partners on a wide variety of fishery issues. During the week of August 25th personnel from La Crosse FRO assisted the Iowa City Office of the US Geological Survey on their National Water Quality Assessment (NAWQA) program. This program was implemented in 1991 to support informational needs and decisions related to water-quality management and policy. The NAWQA Program is designed to answer questions concerning our nation's water resources. Information on water chemistry, physical characteristics, stream habitat, and aquatic life are collected. This allows resource managers to make science-based decisions on water quality issues. La Crosse FRO has been called on to provide their expertise on the fishery aspects of this project. Three sites along the Iowa River and one site on the Wapsipinicon River were electrofished to determine the fish community structure. All fish were identified to species and weighted and measured. This fishery information will be analyzed in combination with the other aspects of the study which will allow water resource managers to make informed decisions. The NAWQA Program has been active for over ten years and 42 of the original 51 Study Units will be reassessed for an additional ten years.



**Scott Yess**

## ***Outreach:***

### **Chaseburg Rod and Gun Youth Learn about Fishery Biology Technology** **09/06/2003**

***About 80 local youth and their chaperones learned about the use of technology by fishery biologists, fish species they work with, hatchery operation and fisheries careers as a whole. This was a great opportunity to reach out to local sport clubs and inform them about current projects and issues. Local youth also learned about the career of fishery biologists. There were several groups of people that requested a presentation to their organization in the future.***

Chaseburg Rod and Gun hosted its annual Youth Day on Saturday, September 6th. Employees from the La Crosse Fishery Resource Office and Genoa National Fish Hatchery gave presentations to 80 people about technology of fishery biology, identification and biology of fish species, collection of fish for research, and hatchery operation. Children and their chaperones viewed electroshocking, radio telemetry, and fish tagging equipment, as well as several live mussel and fish species. A shocking boat was displayed with a generator, shocking box, and booms with droppers. Pit tags, monel tags, spaghetti tags and coded wire tags were some of the tagging devices shown to the audience. Genoa NFH displayed an aquarium that contained lake sturgeon, walleye, large mouth bass and several other species of fish. Other presentations and activities at the event included trap shooting, .22 target shooting, a bow shoot, tomahawk and knife throwing, arrow painting, arrowhead and spearhead crafting, reloading shot gun shells, fishing tackle, dog training and several others. This was a great opportunity for the La Crosse FRO to reach out to local sport clubs and inform them about current projects and issues. There were several groups of people that requested a presentation to their organization in the future.

**Heidi Keuler**